FAMOUS BRITISH REGIMENTS.

A friendly rivalry has long existed between the rifle brigade and the King's royal rifles as to which is the eldest or premier rifle corps in the British army. The latter being numbered as the sixtieth would seem to take precedence of the former, which began life as the ninety-fifth. But then the sixtieth was raised for service in America and was recruited mainly among foreigners. The old law forbade the quartering of foreign troops within the limits of the realm, and although various battalions of the royal American regiment had been seen in English garrisons, it was only on sufferance when first formed or when passing through to some distant station. Even then the Channel islands were if possible chosen for the station. In those early days it was to all intents and purposes a colonial corps and so it remained practically until 1824. Hence the claim of the rifle brigade, or old "ninety-fifth," to be called the first British or native-born body of riflemen in the regular army is well grounded and this conclusion is further supported by the terms used by the officers who first urged the creation of the corps. In a joint letter or paper addressed to the war secretary towards the end of 1799, Colonel Coote-Manningham and Lieut. Col. the Hon. William Stewart urged "the importance of having a regiment in the British army armed with a rifle arm."

The upshot of this appeal was the formation of an experimental corps of riflemen out of detachments loaned by twenty-one different regiments, and the total thus brought together at Horsham in Sussex amounted to twenty-six officers and 481 non-commissioned officers and men. The rifle or weapon of precision given to them was the "Baker," the design of a London gunmaker, who carried off the prize at a competition in which rifles from America, France, Germany, Spain and Holland were produced and tried. The Baker rifle was seven-grooved, with a quarter turn; it weighed nine and a half pounds; the bullets were twenty to the pound and it was sighted at 200 yards. Wooden mallets were at first used to ram down the balls, but this was soon discontinued. It may be stated here that the Baker rifle held the ground until 1836, when it was replaced by the Brunswick with two grooves and a belted ball; the Lancaster rifle was first used in the Kaffir wars in 1846-7, and in 1851-2 on the outbreak of the Russion war the Minnie was adopted for all branches of the service and the rifles lost their distinctive chaaracter as such, being armed hereafter with the same weapons as the rest of the line.

After one short spell of active service the experimental corps and consolidated into a regular regiment on the 25th of August, 1800, under the command of its projectors, Colonels Coote-Manningham and Stewart, numbered the ninety-fifth and sometimes known as "Manningham's sharp shooters," but honored finally with the title of rifle brigade in 1816, to which the queen added in 1862 the distinction of the "Prince Consort's Own." The old ninety-fifth has never quite surrendered the name by which it became famous, and the tradition is preserved in the quick step to which it marches on state occasions, the well known inspiring air, "I'm ninety-five, I'm ninety-five."

The rifle corps owed much to the zeal and energy of its first real commander, Colonel Stewart (Colonel Manningham was one of the king's equerries and constantly absent at court.) Stewart was ahead of his time and realized the value of instruction, mental and physical, of giving lectures on military duties, of teaching his men how to become expert marksmen, of practicing athletics and training them to march and move rapidly. The corps had also the advantage of being under the orders of Sir. John Moore when he first introduced the system of "light drill," or skirmishing, which was the parent of our present loose or broken order of attack.

From that time forward the rifles took their place naturally in the post of chief dangers and headed every advance or covered every retreat. It was the constant effort of their officers to encourage individuality and self-reliance in their men; small parties could be detached, even single riflemen to reconnoiter, to bring down fire and so locate the enemy, to hold them in check if too adventurous and prepare the way by showing all was clear for the attack. Nevertheless, they suffered in the beginning of the peninsular war from that same rash daring which has often cost our men dear in this present Transvaal war. In the very first brush with the French some riflemen were severely handled, solely, said Wellington, through the impudence of their officer and the dash and eagerness of the men." Again at Vimiera a rifle officer was heard continually ordering his men to keep back and get under cover. "Do you think you are fighting with your fists," he cried, "that you run into the very teeth of the French?"

They learned better (as we are now learning in South Africa) by experience. Their shooting, too, became deadly; of course at the short ranges that our modern marksmen would despise, but the conflicts in those days were almost hand to hand. They still performed feats of daring but with more circumspection, dropping on to unsuspecting pickets and creeping up close to fortress walls so as to pick off artillerymen at their guns. Moreover, they soon proved that they could wield their sword bayonet, and thus established the value of the rifle at close quarters as well as in long shots.

Wellington in the peninsula paid them frequent well deserved compliments. One day the French were driven out of a wood by the rifles, "to the admiration of the whole army;" another at Sabugal, a narrow squak for defeat, a handful of rifles and others withstood, thrice repulsed and eventually pursued a whole French army corps, and Wellington in his dispatch styled the action "to be one of the most glorious that British troops were ever engaged in." During this fight a rifleman who was aiming at a French man left him when a hare got up and killed the latter. When remonstrated with by his captain, the man replied: "I can kill a Frenchman any day, but it is not always that I can bag a hare for your supper." They were very keen on making "bags" were these riflemen. Two men were seen to leave the ranks and advance toward the enemy: it was feared they were deserting, but their sergeant said they were only bent on a little amusement and they found it in shooting a couple of Frenchmen.

The active service of the rifles was unceasing, extending far beyond the famous sieges and battles of the peninsula, in all of which they were engaged. There were endless minor affairs, in which the rifles figured with unvarying credit and which are only recorded in history by the losses they entailed. There was Craufurd's fight on the Coa into which his impetuous spirit led him to imperil his force against the whole French army. On that day the rifles alone lost twelve officers and thirty-six men, a parallel with some of our recent fights in South Africa. Again there was a sanguinary fight in the pass of Vera; another combat which was almost exclusively a rifleman's affair was that at Tarbes in 1814, when 1,500 of them drove a French division out of a strong position and again lost twelve officers and eighty-one men killed and wounded. In the whole campaign the Ninety-fifth had forty-one officers and 557 men killed in action, with 189 officers and 2,026 men wounded. At Badajos alone the killed and wounded were twenty-three officers and 292 men. Napier is lavish of praise of the Ninety-fifth on that awful storming, when Captain O'Hare perished in the breach and one soldier wedged himself in between "the chained sword blades and then suffered the enemy to dash his head to pieces with the ends of their muskets." At Waterloo there were fourteen companies of the Rifle brigade engaged, and the duke used them continually against the enemy's skirmishers. They were to the front in the closing scene when the Imperial guard was routed, and were taking up the glad shouts of our line just as Wellington checked them with, "No cheering, lads; but go on and complete your victory!"

The Rifle brigade, with its splendid record, came to be considered a corps d'elite and did no service abroad during the thirty-seven years that elapsed between Waterloo and the first Kaffir wars when they again took the field as being especially fitted for the work in hand. They were still the only British troops carrying arms of precision, and their weapons told with great effect, "contributing materially to the successful termination" of the war. In the Crimea their markmanship was forever pitted against that of the Russians in trench and rifle pit and in the open at the Alma and Inkerman. At the latter battle they were among the first reinforcements on the ground and were sent forward into the fight with the reputation of being troops that "could do anything." Our French allies were enthusiastic in their praise of our riflemen. Many men won the Victoria cross; some of them were in all the attacks upon the Redan and more saw the fall of Sebastopol. Two battalions of the Rifle brigade were hurried out to India (their first service there) when the Sepoy mutiny jeopardized our supremacy, and they took part in the battles around Cawnpore, and again in the relief and recapture of Lucknow. After helping to crush the contemptible Fenian raid in Canada they were called to sterner work in Ashanti; they went to India again for the Afghan war and the Burmese annexation; last of all they joined Kitchener for his final advance on Omdurman. Afterward the Second battalion was shut up in Ladysmith with White, having been sharply tested in the early battles, and shortly afterwards was given the Baker rifle, the same as the Ninety-fifth. Its colonel was a Baron de Rottenburg, a soldier of fortune who had fought under the French flag, had been in the Neapolitan army and had commanded a regiment of Poles. Throughout the peninsula it was looked upon as a foreign regiment and was often called the German Riflemen, or the Fifth battalion of the Sixtieth Germans. The other battalions were stationed at Canada and the West Indies and two more, the Sixth and Seventh, were raised also of Germans and an Eighth at Lisbon of "provincials!"

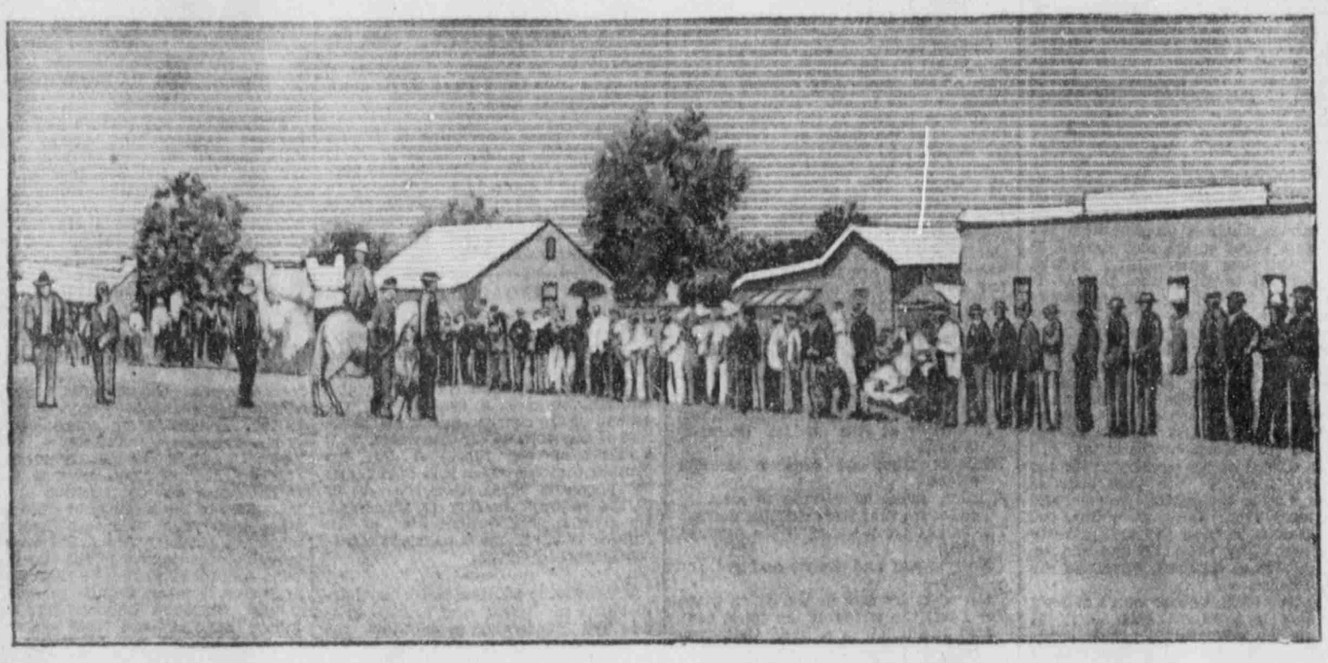
All this effectually disposes of the question of seniority with regard to the Rifle brigade. Not the least did the Sixtieth give splendid service in the peninsula. They were in every battle, every siege and in the numberless small engagements which inflicted great losses, although the meritorious work done is often unrecorded in history. They missed Waterloo by their absence in America, but they were foremost in all the fighting, all at a distance from home, which broke the otherwise universal peace. In the Sikh war, in the Indian mutiny, in China, South Africa against Kaffirs and Zulus, in Afghanistan, in Egypt, and in the relief of Chitral, the king's royal rifles played their part with the same unvarying gallantry.

Now there are three battalions in South Africa, emulating the prowess, the tenacity and pluck of their predecessors. Two were shut up in Ladysmith with White, having exhibited the finest spirit in the earlier episodes of the campaign of North Natal. The first battalion led the attack at Talana hill, where Col. Gunning was killed at the head of the regiment; they cleared the heights of Elangslaagte, and with the second battalion held out sturdily at Pepworth hill, where Col. Grimwood of the regiment acted as brigadier. The third battalion forms part of Lyttleton's brigade of rifle regiment, and if no severe losses were entailed at the Colenso battle, where the rifles were in reserve, they have had their full share of hard work in the western move, where they crossed first at Potgieter's drift, forming a chain hand in hand through the swirling breast-high water, and were used in the flank attack on the Spion Kop mountain. The development of this was characterized by Sir Redvers Buller as one of the finest evolutions ever performed in the teeth of the enemy. The same praise was accorded to another regiment, the Scottish rifles, younger as rifles, but nevertheless old in fame, named as the Perthshire volunteers or the ninetieth light infantry.

This last named regiment, linked now with the old twenty-sixth Cameronians, was raised in 1793 by a private gentleman, Thomas Graham of Balgowan, Perthshire, who only took to soldiering late in life, but had such natural aptitude for war that he rose quickly to be a distinguished general and a military peer, Lord Lynedoch. Graham, having endured a terrible bereavement, offered his services to the state, and was followed into the field by a fine battalion of a thousand men, so easily recruited that he could have got together double the number in the time. The ninetieth, as they came to be called, took part in all the wars of the beginning of the century, and were at the defense of Minorca, in the expedition to Egypt, under Abercromby, but went to the West Indies, and so missed the peninsula war. They were too late for Waterloo, and landed at Ostend a few days after the great battle. Their time was not then, but since, in the Crimea, at the assaults upon the Redan, in India during the mutiny, with Havelock in the relief of Lucknow, and especially in South Africa, their acquaintance with which began in 1846 and has been continued at intervals until today; Kaffir wars and Zulu wars, and wars against the Boers, they were engaged severely and continually; they fought under Wood, one of their own officers, at Kambula kop, and the other day took part in the main fight, the hottest and most protracted, upon the Spion Kop slaughter house.

It has been the curious good fortune of the ninetieth or Scottish rifles to be the military cradle of many most distinguished soldiers. It has given two commanders-in-chief to the British army, Lord Hill and Lord Wolseley; the one led the regiment in Egypt and in the Mediterranean, the other as a captain carried the Mob Mahul palace at Lucknow, a splendid feat of arms. Lord Lynedoch, who raised the regiment, has already been mentioned, and to the list of prominent names must be added that of Sir Evelyn Wood, who rose in the regiment to the highest grades.

GENERAL BRABANT STILL HOLDING HIS OWN IN WEPENER.



The most recent cables received from the front indicate that Gen. Brabant, who is in Wepener, is still holding his own. This picture of the town that figures so prominently in the news of the day was taken just previous to the occupation of the place by the English, when one of the Boer commandos that are now so busy in trying to force the British general to capitulate, was drawn up in the market square for inspection.

BADEN-POWELL.

Today all England is anxiously awaiting news from Mafeking, where Col. Baden-Powell who has so long been holding out against heavy odds is reported dead. The picture shown herewith is said to be the best ever published of this British officer whose bravery and sagacity have won for him the admiration of a nation. Col. Plumer's column is only a few miles from Mafeking, and the news may come almost any day that the city has been relieved. Boer cables are repeating the story of Baden-Powell's death, which the war office denies.

CZAR IN A THREATENING ATTITUDE.

All Europe today looks with interest toward Russia and the Czar, as the attitude of that country seems on all sides to have a meaning. Many precautions have been taken which can have only one meaning. Those in a position to know say that if war does come it will be with Japan, and that the Sick Man of Europe will get another respite. The governor of Vladivostock has issued orders prohibiting the sale of straw and firearms to civilians without a permit, anticipating trouble in the near future.

NEVER ADMIT DEFEAT.

Never admit defeat or poverty, though you seem to be down, and have not a cent. Stoutly assert your divine right to be a man, to hold your head up and look the world in the face; step bravely to the front, whatever opposes, and the world will make way for you. No one will insist upon your rights while you yourself doubt that you have any. Hold firmly the conviction that you possess the qualities requisite for success. Never allow yourself to be a traitor to your own cause by undermining your self-confidence.

There never was a time before when persistent, original force was so much in demand as now. The namby-pamby, nerveless man has little show in the hustling, bustling world today. In the twentieth century a man must either push or be pushed.

Every one admires the man who can assert his rights, and has the power to demand and take them if denied him. No one can respect the man who slinks in the rear and apologizes for being in the world. Negative virtues are of no use in winning one's way. It is the positive man, the man with original energy and push that forges to the front. —"Success."

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